

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

September 2015

Friends, Allies,

First off, no—you did not misplace my August letter. There was no August letter. The month got swept away for me in film trips, writing projects and whoosh—suddenly it was September. Happy September to you!

In my ongoing desire to share with you things God is giving us to help all of us towards a deeper life in him, I found myself lingering in and praying through one of my favorite passages in Scripture, from the Gospel of John. Just before his life comes to its stunning climax, right before the cross, resurrection and ascension, Jesus prayed for us. It must be a very important prayer...

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (17:20-23)

I think many good folk have heard a misinterpretation—that Jesus is praying here for church unity. He is not. Church unity is a good thing, but it is not what Jesus is praying for here. Notice carefully—Jesus prays “that all of them may be one, Father” and then to make it clear what he meant by that phrase he adds, “just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us...” He uses his union with the Father as the picture of the union he wants with us. Then he adds, “May they also be *in us*” to make it perfectly clear. He doesn’t say, “May they love one another,” or, “May they be united with one another.” Jesus is talking about, and praying for, our need for union with God.

And O, how we need this. It is our deepest need.

We are all just branches, after all, in search of a Vine. Every single one of us is searching for a source of Life. I’ll guarantee you that whatever it is you are personally struggling with—forgiving someone who wounded you, or getting past those wounds; achieving a lasting victory over your addictions; the fear, doubt, shame, unbelief, sorrow, rage and carnival of things that keep you from living life whole and free—I’ll guarantee it would all change if you were filled with the Life of God, in ongoing unbroken union with him.

We are all desperately needy souls, needing God every moment of every day. The soul was made that way—to be desperately needy. (That’s reassuring to know, isn’t it? Your profound neediness is not an indication something is wrong with you; it’s your design, not a personal flaw.)

And all that we want to accomplish in the world—the healing and redemption, the beauty and goodness, fulfilling our calling, the miracles we long to see—all that waits on the Life of God

flowing through us in greater measure, too, with greater frequency. In fact this is exactly what Jesus says will be the fruit of the union: “so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” Christianity will be so much more convincing once we have the union Jesus is praying for.

This is our deepest internal, and our deepest external need. So the offer of real and actual union with Jesus and the Father is simply stunning!

I began to dig a little deeper, just to make sure I wasn't exaggerating. The passage is sometimes translated as, “perfect unity” (NLT), or, “perfected in unity” (NASB), or, “So they'll be as unified and together as we are—I in them and you in me. Then they'll be mature in this oneness...” (TM).

Perfectly one. Completely one. Mature in oneness. With God. Wow.

Pause and ask yourself, *Is this what I understand the offer of Christianity to be? And, Is this what I am seeking on a daily basis?*

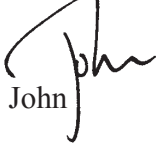
We get sidetracked. I talk to a lot of very good people each year, trying to live lives worthy of being sons and daughters of God. They want the Kingdom; they want everything God has for them. Their efforts range from a variety of self-control to inner healing to warfare to just trying to get their act together. The results are mixed. Because those things cannot substitute for actual union with Jesus. They might be a *means* to the union (I hope that is how they are pursued). But what we need and what he prayed for was perfect union. One life with Him.

Let us ask for it. Every day. It begins by asking for it: *Jesus—make me completely one with you, at every level and in every way. I pray for perfect union with you.*

And then we begin to surrender those places in our lives that don't appear to be cooperating: Your emotions begin to run wild, so you pray, *Jesus – I give my emotional life to you, to be one with you in every way.* Your thoughts begin to go frantic—speculation, worry, fear, self-reproach—so you pause, and pray, *Jesus—I give my mind to you to be perfectly one with you. Unite my mind with your mind in me.* If it is your appetite, or your sexual desires that seem to be quite outside Jesus, offer those: *Jesus, I give my appetite to you [or I give my sexual desires to you] to be perfectly one with you. Come and unite us here, right here, in my appetite [or in my sexuality].* And you keep doing that, daily, until they re-align with Jesus.

I know it sounds terribly simple, but I think the Gospel is simple at its core. You are a branch; you need a Vine. Make your primary work each day re-aligning with the Vine, giving yourself back to him utterly, seeking the union he said he wants with you. Let your primary practices be devoted to union with God. (For some more guidance, watch “Draw Your Life from God” on our website, on RHTV!) I think you will find it utterly refreshing and relieving.

Offered in love,


John